

### Flora & Fauna

### Gardening Secrets of the Not So Rich or Famous!

Avid gardeners tend to behave like Sherlock Holmes when faced with horticulturally-related problems. Like detectives on a mission, they visit nurseries, troll the Internet, bug the reference librarian and pester their gardener friends until they've found a solution to the dilemma. We've sampled some of the most inventive (and entertaining) remedies suggested by a few of these sleuths and hope you'll find at least one that solves a problem that's had you stumped.

- Veggie gardeners can stop stiff winds from damaging their tomato and pepper plants by planting them at a height that's as deep as the first leaves appearing on the plant.
- If you want bigger, better strawberries growing in your patch, remove all of the blooms that grow on your plants during year one. Your garden will produce bigger, better strawberries in year two and all the years thereafter.
- Water your tomatoes with one teaspoon of Epsom salts to a gallon of water to increase the size and flavor of your fruit.
- Mix crushed eggshells and a little milk with water to spur growth and general garden health for all of your plants.
- Growing green peppers? Place large rocks next to each plant. The sun will warm the rocks and draw heat to the pepper plants, which, in turn, make peppers grow better and healthier.
- Put the nozzle of your watering source as close to the root of your tomato plants as possible. Tomatoes don't like wet leaves and stay healthier if moisture is concentrated elsewhere.
- If ants overrun your garden, sprinkle grits (not instant ones!) in problem areas and you'll eradicate many of them. Alternately, dry yeast will also wipe them out because when ants eat either, then drink water, they literally explode.
- While we're on the topic of breakfast foods, used coffee grounds, sprinkled around the base of plants being attacked by snails and slugs, has been successful in wiping them out.
- A dish filled with beer will permanently knock out slugs, too, according to some gardeners.
- Water houseplants with herbal tea for bigger, better growth.
- Finally, chalk and talcum powder lines really do stop ants in their tracks, so try this, too!

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### Household Tips: Creative Cleaning

Watching your décor turn from blah to beautiful can be a real spirit-lifter, but tackling the post-project cleanup is never on anyone's "favorite things to do" list. Sometimes, all it takes is a great tip from an expert, and that's exactly what this month's tips column covers.

- 1) Rub petroleum jelly on your hands before you pick up that brush or roller to paint a room. It seals the pores in your hands, taking the post-painting job of clean-up from problematic to quick.
- 2) Time's the trade-off when you paint around windows, so take this advice from a pro: Extend the paint into the glass rather than spending hours taping. Not only does the paint do a better job of sealing in moisture if it intrudes on the glass, but taking a razor blade to the paint overage leaves a neater finish.
- 3) When you need it most, does your vacuum cleaner come up short in the length department? Use an empty gift-wrap tube to add feet to your reach (flatten the end to access tight crevices).
- 4) Before you store leftover paint, mark the outside of the can in such a way that you know exactly what's inside. Paint a wide swath of color to show both how much paint remains inside and what color it is. No more prying open sticky cans to discover an inch of slime inside!

## October

- 1608** Hans Lippershay invented the first modern telescope and offered it exclusively to the Dutch government
- 1836** Charles Darwin returned to England from his historic travels aboard the HMS Beagle
- 1883** A crash between the British ships Holyhead and Alhambra resulted in the drownings of 38 people, 17 horses and 300 pigs in the Irish Sea
- 1913** Congress signed the Income Tax into law; U.S. citizens were taxed 1% of their incomes
- 1929** The Kingdoms of Serb, Croat and Slovene merged to become the nation of Yugoslavia
- 1974** The Watergate trial began
- 1984** The U.S. Government closed down due to budget problems; it had run out of money
- 1991** Elizabeth Taylor celebrated her eighth wedding ceremony when she married Larry Fortensky at Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch

## Health Tips: Allergy Relief; it's Only Natural

If you think the number of airborne allergy triggers and sufferers have accelerated in our nation over the past decade, you'd be right on the money. Chances are good that you or your family members suffer from one or more of these seasonal curses and if they're particularly debilitating, you might be ready to consider alternative, prescription- and shot- free remedies to help control the symptoms. Why seek relief elsewhere? Research shows that a large number of people who take pharmaceuticals to help them cope with their allergies continue to suffer from stuffy noses, sinus pressure, fatigue, sneezing, watery eyes and postnasal drip, despite treatment.

Physicians recommend taking proactive measures to prevent attacks, like identifying triggers, doing everything possible to filter pollutants from the home, using a variety of sprays and pills, keeping up with the latest immunology news and being persistent about getting treatment.

Some also recommend looking into alternative medicine because they've seen their standard treatments successfully dovetail with homeopathic ones.

Homeopathy and homeopathic medicines have waxed and waned in terms of public acceptance and many of us have no clue what separates the two. The easiest-to-understand definition we've found is this: Traditional medicines work to suppress allergy symptoms so sufferers can function during seasonal episodes. Homeopathic remedies change the way the body reacts to allergens, treating the cause rather than the symptom.

Like many alternative treatments, homeopathy is not without its critics, but for those of us who suffer horribly, it all comes down to whether we are willing to try something new. That's what happened to *Prevention* magazine editor Sara Altshul, whose sinus problems had defied so many medical treatments, there were no relief options left but surgery. Altshul, always current on every medical advance in the wind, called the National Center for Homeopathy at (877) 624-0613, received a referral for a local practitioner and visited him. He prescribed an herbal remedy and within days, decades of symptoms vanished. "It's been six years," she writes, "and my allergies are still in check."

If your allergies are responding to medications and you're still interested in natural ways to keep healthy, here's one that may help you perk up your nose and your world: The English Ivy plant lowers levels of airborne mold in a room in just a few days because its leaves act as filtering systems. For about \$3 a plant, you get plenty: a touch of beauty and fewer sneezes!

## **Kids: How to Raise a Real Character**

All of us want to see our kids become happy, healthy, successful contributors to society, but the modern world throws plenty of hurdles in our path. Peer pressure, media influence and a world that's changing at warp speed make the job of raising kids with character a huge challenge. Happily, your willingness to spend time and give the attention necessary to raise your kids right will make all of the difference. Buoy your natural instincts and everything you learned from your folks to make sure your kids get every advantage – and we don't mean the material advantages. These 10 tips include common-sense advice you probably already know and are using!

- 1) Put parenting first. If you prioritize your time with your children, you'll help build character.
- 2) Audit the amount of time you spend with your kids and figure out how to increase it.
- 3) Be a great example. Take responsibility. Be fair. Show your kids it's OK to take a stand.
- 4) Be a kid snoop. Understand what messages your kids are being bombarded with each day.
- 5) Use the language of character. There's wrong; there's right and it's comforting to know both.
- 6) Infuse punishments with love. Kids need limits. You're the parent. Exercise your rights.
- 7) Listen. Work hard not to tune out your children when you're tired, preoccupied or worried.
- 8) Involve yourself in your child's school world and you'll be the proud parent of a great student.
- 9) Revive the tradition of the family meal, for this can be where values, manners, respect and communication are honored and held sacred.
- 10) Know that words are great but deeds are greater. Promote moral living through self-discipline, a strong work ethic and community service by showing, not telling.

- 1 bunch asparagus (about 1 pound), trimmed
- 12-oz flank steak
- 3 tsp. regular or lite soy sauce
- 1 tsp each, grated orange peel and ginger
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper (optional)

- 1) Coat grill with nonstick spray and heat.
- 2) Meanwhile, put all of the other ingredients into a zip-lock bag and thoroughly coat meat.
- 3) Grill steak about 6 minutes to medium-rare.
- 4) Remove steak from fire to cutting board and let it rest 5 minutes.
- 5) Place asparagus on the fire and grill for about 5 minutes. (should be crisp but tender)
- 6) Slice steak thinly across the grain, place on plates and top with asparagus.

Fall is at hand and unless you live in the south, we're betting your barbeque has been scoured and retired to spend the season under its winter covering. That's why we picked an easy-to-prepare recipe that was designed for an indoor grill. Experience Winter Barbecue Envy no longer, no matter where you live!

### Window Tricks (Offer Plenty of Treats)

Unless you're handy with a sewing machine and know the ins and outs of drapery making, most of us are at the mercy of retailers when it comes to dressing our windows. Whether we buy ready-made curtains/drapes, hire a seamstress to whip them up or go to a shop specializing in window art, it's a sure bet that the price tag is going to be memorable. The problem with manufactured window dressing is that there's nothing unique or distinctive about most. Maybe that's why we marvel at the talents of friends who are able to whip up unique curtains and other types of window trim. Envy them no more! Decorator/designer Nancy Golden specializes in helping homeowners like you come up with innovative looks using simple, every day, easy-to-find materials that don't cost a fortune. Consider them if you're seeking a one-of-a-kind look surrounding your favorite window.

**Design one: Fabric Fancy** - Purchase 10 yards of drapery fabric.

Hem or use hemming tape on the ends, then drape the fabric over a rod to create a single, large loop in front of the rod (it should hang down at the center). Stuff the center section with tissue paper to give it body, then arrange the material. Billow the two hanging panels on the floor if there's extra fabric. To add one-of-a-kind touches, attach faux jewels with fabric glue. For under \$100, a traffic-stopping window is yours.

**Design two: Napkin Nirvana** - Make a custom-made valance by purchasing three napkins and folding them diagonally to make a bold window treatment. Drape two of the folded napkins over your curtain rod (points facing in) at either end of the rod, then drape a third folded napkin atop both in the center (point facing down). Get an extra boost of contrast by nesting contrasting napkin colors (a print with solid white, for instance) so the swag appears to have a border. Stitch tassels, upholstery jewels or other trim to the points for touches of glamour.

**Design three: Luscious Lace** - Pair a delicate, crocheted tablecloth with your favorite style of shower curtain hooks to make fast work of an unattractive window. It takes only a few minutes to pop on the hooks, then loop in the lace. Use ribbon tiebacks to add a contrasting color, and, if you choose white or off-white lace, you can change the ribbon tiebacks according to the season.

**Design four: Tablecloth Transformation** - Find a tablecloth to fit your window. Use a grommet-attachment tool and grommets to create hole fasteners at regular intervals on the tablecloth's hem. Thread rope, twine or decorative cord through the grommets and hang from a rod. This look is particularly striking if you seek to recreate a nautical theme and pair white roping with a tablecloth screened with art from the sea.

### Carpet Talk: Stop Traffic

Quick - name the areas of your carpet that take the most abuse and show it. If you guessed high-traffic areas like entryways, doors and halls, you win the prize. Dirt, grime and other left-behind soil have the ability to age your carpet fast, leaving you with new-looking rugs in some areas of your home while others look like they're ready to be ripped up and dumped. Professionals call this phenomenon "Traffic Lane Gray," and it's a perfect description.

Failure to treat these areas as soon as you notice them can put you at risk of having to replace your wall-to-wall earlier than necessary, so follow the advice of professionals and make your high-traffic areas a weekly priority:

- 1) Even if you can't get to every inch of your carpet this often, vacuum heavily traveled areas three times a week using a vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter.

- 2) If a stain or spill appears in a high-traffic area, tackle it immediately with a spot remover. Use the technique your professional carpet care provider employs: remove matter, apply spotter and blot with a clean, white cloth. Rubbing is the worst possible action you can take on a carpet stain, so make sure you don't. For more than just minor spots, call in the professionals!

- 3) Be creative when it comes to traffic patterns, in general. If you notice that an area is beginning to show more wear than its surroundings, rearrange your furniture and consider throw rugs, area rugs and runners to buy extra time before you must replace your entire carpet.

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**Inside this issue you'll find:**

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